107TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 272

Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the success of the Varela Project's collection of 10,000 certified signatures in support of a national referendum and the delivery of these signatures to the Cuban National Assembly.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 20, 2002

Mr. NELSON of Florida submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the success of the Varela Project's collection of 10,000 certified signatures in support of a national referendum and the delivery of these signatures to the Cuban National Assembly.

Whereas Article 88 of the Cuban Constitution states that the Cuban National Assembly should schedule a national referendum if it receives the verified signatures of 10,000 legal voters;

Whereas on May 10, 2002, a group of Cuban citizens led by Oswaldo Paya delivered 11,020 verified signatures to the Cuban National Assembly in support of a referendum;

Whereas Mr. Paya's petition drive is inspired by the 19th-century priest and Cuban independence hero, Padre Felix Varela, and is known as the Varela Project;

Whereas the Varela Project seeks a referendum on civil liberties, including freedom of speech, amnesty for political prisoners, support for private business, a new electoral law, and a general election;

Whereas the Varela Project is supported by 140 opposition organizations in Cuba and has received no money or support from foreign citizens or foreign governments;

Whereas the Varela Project is the largest petition drive in Cuban history;

Whereas the Varela Project seeks amnesty for all of those who have been detained, sanctioned, or jailed for political motives and who have not participated in acts directly threatening the lives of others;

Whereas the Varela Project seeks to guarantee citizens the right to form private businesses, to carry out economic activities that could be productive and of service, and to establish contracts between workers and businesses for the development of these businesses in fair and just conditions so that no one may obtain profits by exploiting the work of others;

Whereas the Varela Project is a step in moving Cuba toward achieving international standards for human rights;

Whereas the goal of United States policy in Cuba is to promote a peaceful transition to democracy through an active policy of supporting the forces of change on the island; and

Whereas the Varela Project is engaged in the promotion of a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba: Now, therefore, be it

1   *Resolved,* That the Senate—

2   (1) supports the constitutional right of the citi-

3   zens of Cuba who have signed the Varela Project to

4   petition the Cuban National Assembly for a ref-

5   erendum;

6   (2) calls on the Cuban government to accept

7   the Varela Project petition and, in accordance with

8   its obligation under Article 88 of the Cuban Con-

9   stitution, to hold a referendum on civil liberties, in-

10   cluding freedom of speech, an amnesty for political

11   prisoners, support for private business, a new elec-

12   toral law, and a general election;

13   (3) praises the bravery of Oswaldo Paya and

14   his colleagues in collecting 11,020 verified signatures

15   in support of the Varela Project;

16   (4) calls on the Cuban government to provide

17   its citizens with internationally accepted standards

18   for civil and human rights, and the opportunity to

19   vote in free and fair elections;

20   (5) urges the President and his representatives

21   to take all appropriate steps to support the Varela

22   Project and any future efforts by the Cuban people

1 to assert their constitutional right to petition the

2 National Assembly in support of a referendum; and

3 (6) urges the President to pursue an action-ori-

4 ented policy of directly assisting the Cuban people

5 and independent organizations to strengthen the

6 forces of change and to improve human rights in

7 Cuba.

8 SEC. 2. The Secretary of the Senate shall transmit

9 a copy of this resolution to the President.

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